FBI Agent Explains Variance in Count of Shots at John Kennedy

NEW ORLEANS, Feb. 22 (UPI)—President John F. Kennedy was killed by rifle shots fired from a sixth-floor window behind him, and anyone who heard more than three shots was the victim of "sonic booms" caused by the whiz of bullets, an FBI firearms expert told the Clay L. Shaw trial today.

The Warren Commission said Lee Harvey Oswald was perched in that window of the Texas school book depository, and said he was the unassisted assassin.

The testimony by Robert A. Frazier contradicted District Attorney Jim Garrison's claim that Mr. Kennedy was killed by a "triangulation of fire"—including bullets fired from the front.

Garrison charged Shaw, 55, a retired businessman, with plotting with Oswald and ex-pilot David W. Ferrie to murder Mr. Kennedy. The 6-foot-4 Shaw, who wears his silver hair in a crew cut, is charged with conspiracy, not with the actual murder.

Defense Attorney F. Irvin Dymond asked Frazier the key question today:

"From all the evidence you have examined did you find any evidence that the shots came from any place other than the sixth-floor window of the depository?"

"No, sir," Frazier replied.

Relatively Easy

Frazier, chief of the firearms identification unit of the FBI Laboratory in Washington, said it was "a relatively easy shot" with the 6.5 mm Italian military rifle that was found in the depository to the point 265 feet away to the slow moving presidential limousine Nov. 22, 1963.

Frazier said small "sonic booms" caused some witnesses of the assassination in downtown Dallas to hear more or fewer than the three shots the Warren Commission said were fired by Oswald. He said the muzzle velocity of a bullet fired from the Manlicher-Carcano rifle was 1800 feet per second and that the speed of sound is 1100 feet per second.

"When a person is standing in front of a bullet fired faster than sound, they hear a sonic boom from the bullet itself prior to the time they hear the report of the muzzle blast," Frazier testified.

Easily Confused

"In this case one would hear the sonic boom and then a second or a fraction of a second later hear the sound of the report," he said.

"They are very easily confused unless you are listening for them."

Earler testimony in the Shaw trial by persons at the scene in Dealey Plaza, has varied in the number of sounds heard. Most witnesses said they heard three shots. Two said they heard four and one described only two shots.

The prosecution rested Thursday on the 26th trial day. Dymond said his case would take only three or four days. The case was expected to go to the jury within a week.

Frazier also testified today that he believed one of the assassin's bullets was slowed up enough by hitting Mr. Kennedy that it did not break the windshield of the big, black limousine when it struck from behind.

He also said it seemed apparent that an earlier bullet that went through the President's neck from the rear went through the chest, wrist and into the left thigh of former Texas Gov. John B. Connally.

Connally to Testify

Connally and his wife Nellie were riding on the limousine's jump seats during the Dallas motorcade. Connally was wounded seriously. The former Governor who now practices law in Houston has been subpoenaed to testify as a defense witness.

Frazier, his voice croaking from a sore throat, testified he examined Mr. Kennedy's coat, shirt and necktie and Connally's coat and shirt.

"I found only one hole," he said of the shirt. "It was a small hole, a quarter of an inch in diameter, five and three-eighths inches below the top of the collar in back and one and three-quarter inches to the right of the midline."

He said the position of the cloth fibers around the bullet hole indicated the shot was fired from the rear.

Assistant District Attorney Alvin V. Oser asked Frazier under cross examination why was there a round hole in the back of Kennedy's shirt and in the front a hole that looked like an elongated tear?

Base Provided

Frazier said at the entrance point the flesh tended to provide a base for the bullet to press against so that it made a round hole. When exiting, he said, the bullet pushed the shirt away from the flesh and the effect was to make a tear instead of a round hole.

Frazier said the hole in the President's coat might not necessarily match the wound in his back because a man's coat tends to pucker up when he sat in a car seat.

"Do you recall any photos that showed the President's coat puckered up?" Oser asked.

"No," Frazier replied.

"Did you take into account the fact that the Governor's coat might have been puckered up?" Oser asked.

Acting Under Direction

"I did not take anything into account," Frazier replied. "I was acting at the direction of the President's Commission."

Dymond asked Frazier if it were possible for a bullet to have been fired from the front—as Garrison claims was done.

"It would have had to penetrate either the windshield or the metal front part of the car in the front seat," Frazier said.

Criminal Dist. Judge Edward A. Haggerty Jr. broke in to ask if the assassin had to lead the target since the limousine was moving.

"With the vehicle traveling 12 miles per hour, he would have had to shoot six inches over the target," Frazier said. "In my opinion 12 miles per hour does not require much proficiency in leading a target."